The Lion's Den

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/27589807.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Relationship:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter
Characters:	Will Graham, Hannibal Lecter, Abigail Hobbs
Additional Tags:	Alpha/Beta/Omega Dynamics, Alpha/Omega, Omega Will Graham, Alpha Hannibal Lecter, Slow Burn, Short, Scenting
Language:	English
Series:	Part 2 of Hannibal (Omegaverse Remix)
Stats:	Published: 2020-11-16 Words: 810 Chapters: 1/1

The Lion's Den

by Sanguineheroine

Summary

Will goes willingly into the lion's den. But is he friend or food?

Continues from 'A Lion in the Room'.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

The office smells like Hannibal. Not the light spice of his cologne but his animal *Alpha* scent of musk and blood and seed, rich and potent. It's politely veiled with enough neutraliser to make betas and even other alphas comfortable but for Will it's almost unbearably strong. He breathes through his mouth and tries to focus on his own scent, on chamomile and vanilla and the nothingness of beta pheromones.

"Now our conversation can proceed, unobstructed by paperwork." Hannibal says, and slides a signed and stamped document across the desk to Will. Will folds it into neat thirds and slides it into his satchel.

"This isn't just about paperwork," Will says without meeting his eyes. "Jack thinks I need therapy."

Hannibal considers that for a few moments and Will turns away. He moves to one of the towering windows and watches the city with unfocused eyes, running his fingers over the smooth wool upholstery of an analyst's couch as he moves. The glass of the window is cool and Will hunches closer, letting the curtains rustle against his face, heavy silk hiding him from view as Hannibal speaks.

"What you need is a way out of dark places when Jack sends you there. A light to guide you back to the safety of your fort."

Will thinks about how his home looks from the edge of the woods when he comes home in the early winter dark, the light that pours from the windows and gilds the porch railings; how it all seems to float above a swirling sea of ground fog like a ship at sea. Will has always felt safest on the water.

"Last time he sent me into a dark place I brought something back." Will mutters into the window. His voice is unexpectedly amplified, shocking in the quiet of the small space behind the curtain.

"A surrogate daughter?"

It's not a question. It's an offer. Shared responsibility, mutual obligation, *family* .

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The idea of family takes root in Will. He sits by Abigail's bed and reads fairy tales in his childhood tongue; a melodic mix of Creole and English that brings back memories of his father's voice and calloused hands, and the more distant image of a dark-haired *someone* who sang lilting French lullabies.

Unwilling to leave Abigail alone, Will naps on the couch by the door. He wakes to a familiar scent and the sound of Hannibal's voice; he's reading *Alice in Wonderland* .

"When Abigail wakes up, she might very well think that we are both mad." Will says without opening his eyes. Hannibal rumbles and huffs, a lion's growling laugh.

“It was my sister’s favourite. Our nurse read it to her in Russian, but I prefer English.”

Will settles back and listens to the story. His heart feels strangled, overgrown with compassion.

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Hannibal invites him to dinner.

The lion’s den is furnished in dark wood and rich jewel-like colours and at the heart of it is a kitchen; clean and bright and comfortable. Will drinks his wine and breathes the warm, close air and Hannibal’s scent mixed with salt and herbs until he is flushed with it, ripe and loose-limbed and slick with the beginnings of desire. His thighs tremble with the need to run, to flee the predator. Will excuses himself politely.

In the closed space of the powder room, Will can smell the briny odor of his arousal under the fading sweetness of his pheromone oil. He wipes at himself with damp paper until he feels clean, then dabs the roller over his thighs and under his arms. He examines the flat line of his body, held brutally down by two layers of binding, then applies oil to his scent glands before putting his clothes to rights. Finally, he blots his face with cool water then dry paper to erase all traces of his sweat then washes his hands with scented soap until nothing of his own scent remains.

Hannibal serves miso soup with morels and enoki mushrooms.

“Really?” Will asks archly, picking up his chopsticks and his spoon. The soup is rich on his tongue, salty and sweet. He thinks, almost reflexively, of semen.

“Some Pacific tribes ate conquered chiefs as proof of their dominion over vanquished enemies. Consider this a symbolic consumption.” Hannibal’s teeth shine in the dim light.

“I didn’t kill Eldon Stammets.” Will says. “I thought about killing him. I'm still not entirely sure that wasn't my intention in pulling the trigger.”

His only intention had been to protect Abigail. Fulfill his obligation. Defend his family.

They finish their meal in silence and Will declines both coffee and dessert.

Hannibal helps Will into his coat and then stays close behind him at the open door. His scent is dizzying. Will feels caught, helpless. The lion’s teeth are at his neck, lips parted, tasting.

“There you are,” Hannibal murmurs, “ *Omega* .”

End Notes

Yes, I do happen to think that miso soup tastes a little like semen. Was there actually semen in the soup? Maybe, it's Hannibal after all.

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